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Chelsea
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MEMORIAL

OF

CAPTAIN CHARLES COCHRANE,

A BRITISH OFFICER IN THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR,

1774-1781.

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CAPTAIN COCHRANE'S MEMORIAL.

At a meeting of the Massachusetts Historical Society, May 14, 1891, the Hon. Mellen Chamberlain said that within a few years there had come to light much interesting and some historically important information respecting a group of young men who followed the British flag to Boston in the summer of 1774, in the attempt by the mother country to reduce the colonies to imperial subjection.

The first was a series of letters written from Boston or New York, in 1774–1776, by Capt. W. Glanville Evelyn, a copy of which is in the library. Captain Evelyn, of the same family as the author of "Sylva," was in the famous Fourth Regiment, "The King's Own," and participated in the affairs at Lexington and Bunker Hill. He was mortally wounded in the skirmish at Throg's Neck, Oct. 18, 1776, and died November 6. Captain Cochrane was one of the executors of his will.

Of similar interest was a collection of original letters of Lord Percy written about the same time, and now in the Boston Public Library.

But the most valuable was a memorial of his military career prepared by Capt. Charles Cochrane, who was with the main army from its arrival at Boston, in 1774, or with Clinton or Cornwallis in their Southern campaigns, till his death at Yorktown, Oct. 17, 1781.

Captain Cochrane was of the Scottish family of that name, in which was the Earldom of Dundonald, whose personal histories filled some space in the public eye in the fifty years included in the last quarter of the eighteenth and the first quarter of the nineteenth century. He was the next younger brother of Archibald, the ninth Earl of Dundonald, who after

some service in the army and navy succeeded to the earldom on the death of his father, in 1778, and thereafter gave his attention to scientific pursuits, in which he made some discoveries more profitable to his country than to himself, and died in poverty, July 1, 1831.

Captain Cochrane's youngest brother, Sir Alexander Forrester Inglis, K. C. B., Admiral of the Blue in 1819, gained great distinction with Rodney in the West Indies, and with Lord Keith and Sir Ralph Allen in Egypt in 1801. He was unpleasantly known in America as commander of the British fleet about Chesapeake Bay in the War of 1812, and he assisted the land forces in the attack on New Orleans in 1815.

Other members of the family became known in various fields of activity, but none more so than Captain Cochrane's nephew, Thomas, Lord Cochrane, the tenth Earl of Dundonald, whose long and varied career in Europe and in South America needs no recital here.

Hon. Charles Cochrane, whose memorial will be presently laid before the Society, was born Jan. 23, 1749. He was an ensign in the Twenty-fifth Regiment for six years; and for the same time, from 1768, a lieutenant in the Seventh Regiment of Foot. On April 17, 1774, he embarked for Boston as the youngest captain in "The King's Own," — Captain Evelyn, above mentioned, being the next older. It was a detachment of this regiment that, on the request of the loyalists of Plymouth County, was sent to Marshfield, Jan. 23, 1775, to protect the members of the "Loyal Association," in the formation of which Timothy Ruggles took a prominent part. The detachment was recalled to Boston soon after the hostilities at Lexington. Captain Cochrane's services between 1774 and his death in October, 1781, are fully set forth in the account which he gives of them in the following memorial.

Captain Cochrane's memorial, which is without date, address, signature, or heading, appears to be an office copy of the original made for the head of the department to which the subject of it belonged, and in this case presumably, Lord George Germaine.

In the beginning of 1774 Capt. Cochrane purchased a company, and went abroad to America as Captain in the 4th Regiment.

He was employed by Lord Percy as one of the officers he sent privately the evening before the affair of Lexington upon a very trying service,

and during the following day Captain Cochrane had much to do in assisting his father in law Major Pitcairn, who was after killed in the action of Bunker's Hill.

Captain Cochrane was then appointed to the Grenadier Company upon Capt. West being wounded and going to England.[1]

On the 29th Augt 1776, having the oldest company of Grenadiers in the army and consequently being on the right of that corps, he was so situated as to endeavour to take an active part. His company went particularly close to the rebel lines, and were with difficulty restrained from being in them.[2]

Until the 28th Sepr, the affair of White Plains, he continued to serve in the Grenadiers. Capt. West returning about that time from England, and Capt. Evelyn of the Light Infantry being killed, he resigned the Grenadiers to their former captain, and took the command of the vacant Light Company, which he had the honor to command from that time until the embarkation of the 4th Regiment for the West Indies in 1778.

His company was present on every service, and the active part they ever took in the moment of action is known to his superior officers and coetemporarys.

After many losses during the winter's duty at Brunswick in 1778 his company in the action at Brandywine lost an officer and 11 men in forcing that part of the rebel line where their five field pieces were.

In the action of Germantown he lost an officer and 5 men; during this day being joined by the 42d Light Company and half of the 17th, he had the fortune to meet the 9th Virginia Regiment which had penetrated through the British line, and were pillaging the wigwams of the 4th & 42d Light Companies when they were attacked and totally destroyed by the above two companies and a half.[3]

This campaign his company had 2 officers & 22 men killed or wounded.

At Philadelphia in 1778, having been six years an ensign, six a lieutenant, and near five a captain,

He memorialed Sir William Howe to be permitted to purchase (if no senior captain in the regiment would) the majority of the 4th Reg-

[1] He was wounded at Bunker Hill, June 17.

[2] Captain Evelyn's account of this affair is as follows: "The next day, a few companies of Light Infantry were prompted to attack a party of the rebels, and with more ardour than discretion, pushed them to their very lines, where they were supported by their cannon." — *Letters*, p. 85.

[3] "The Americans attacked this post on the morning of the 4th October, and drove in the piquets of the right wing. The Fourth were moved forward to support the light infantry, and the assault was sustained with such determined bravery, that the enemy could make no impression at this point of attack." — *Historical Record of the Fourth Regiment*, p. 70.

iment, expected soon to be vacant by the intended promotion of Major Balfour to the Lieut. Colonelcy of the 23d Regimt

Captain Cochrane had not the happiness to be permitted, and Sir James Murray rather, — an older captain, but not near so long in the service, — was put over his head as Major into the 4th Regiment.

Hurt by his want of success or interest to effectuate his preferment, and desirous to obtain it in any way, he soon after consented to exchange his company for a lieutenancy in the 1st Guards, an exchange which has been attended with much expence to him, and was permitted to serve in America as Major of the British Legion which Sir Henry Clinton had about that time honoured him with.

In this corps he has continued to serve ever since, particularly inspecting the infantry of it.

He was the first who introduced into the army the species of service of mounted light infantry, a kind of corps theretofore unknown, though the subsequent advantages have been found from much experience to answer the fullest expectations.

The cavalry and infantry of the Legion has ever mooved together, and have gone with confidence any distance from the main army when mutually supporting one another.

Zealous for the honor of the corps and to promote the service, the infantry have chearfully often rode eighty miles in twenty four hours without either bridle or saddle, and only a blanket and piece of rope substituted as bridle, assisting their cavalry to surprize and beat the enemy.

With confidence Capt. Cochrane may say that no cavalry can or has acted in America until the co-operation of mounted infantry was introduced with them, and that upon every occasion the infantry of the Legion have bore an ample share of either fatigue or honor in all actions since the formation of the corps, which the following extracts from public orders and instances of their conduct will testify.

Charles Town, 12th May, 1780.

Copy of Sir Henry Clinton's thanks to the army, and particularly to Lieutenant Colonel Tarleton and the corps of cavalry.

And to the infantry of the Legion for their soldierlike conduct and gallantry which gives them such brilliant advantage over the enemy.

Campden, June 1st

Orders. Lord Cornwallis desires that Lieut. Colonel Tarleton, Major Cochrane, and the officers and soldiers of the Legion and detachment serving with them, will accept of his warmest acknowledgments for the splendid services they have rendered their country by the gallant action of the 29th of May.

The rapidity of their march and the vigour of their attack will ever reflect the highest honour on them, the brilliant success will be a memorable proof of the undaunted courage of the soldiers, and the distinguished abilities of the officers by whom they were commanded.[1]

In February, 1779, the infantry had the pleasure to execute Sir William Erskine's orders with success in protecting some government vessells at Sagg Harbour when attacked by a formidable rebel fleet, and even took from them a new continental brig of sixteen six pounders, which is now a sloop of war in his Majesty's service.

In the surprize of the rebel Dragoons at Monk's Corner this campaign, by dismounting the infantry when in the village, we were enabled to attack the rebels when they defended their houses at night, and pursue those who attempted to escape.

Major Vernier of the rebel Legion and many others suffered from this sort of service.

During the blockade of Charlestown a number of sloops and schooners having been taken on the Wardoo River by the Legion infantry, with the approbation of the Commander in Chief, they fitted these vessels up with 18 pounders and manned them, and were the means of compleating the difficulties thrown in the way of the rebels escaping by Cooper or Wardoo Rivers.

In the action of Lenew's Ferry the 6th of May, where Lieut! Colonel Tarleton (as he has ever done) gained much honorable advantage over the rebels, the mounted infantry were up, and pursued the rebel Dragoons into the swamp, destroying many of them in it, and the Santee River.

After the surrender of Charlestown a large body of rebels were endeavouring to retire by the back parts of the Province, and being far ahead of Lord Cornwallis's corps, his Lordship the 27th of May detached Lieut! Colonel Tarleton & Major Cochrane with the cavalry and infantry of the Legion with directions to harrass and impede their retreat as much as possible.

The infantry, though not half mounted, then got all to Campden in two days, which is 60 miles, and it being necessary to push the rebels without loss of time, Colonel Beaufort having got three days march a head, the whole corps moved at 2 o'clock the following morning, though two companies were not then compleated with horses, they were however mounted before they marched 20 miles, and except the

[1] Captain Cochrane's statement is confirmed by General Greene in a letter to General Steuben, Feb. 15, 1781: "Cornwallis's movements are so rapid, that few or no militia join us. He marches from 20 to 30 miles in a day; and is organized to move with the same facility as a light infantry corps. Should he continue to push us, we must be finally ruined without reinforcements." — GORDON, vol. iv. p. 46.

guard left with their 3 pounders the infantry of the Legion were fortunately up at the moment of attacking the rebels at Waxaw.

Their conduct on this occasion, and the part they contributed towards the success of the day was as much as men could do.

The advantages resulting from having infantry up will appear from the opinions and conduct of the rebel officers at the commencement of this action.

While Capt. Cochrane was dismounting and forming the infantry opposite the rebel centre, he heard a rebel officer upon the right call to his men, —

" Be cool and take care what they were about, that it was only a few light horse, and they would give a good account of them."

He was answered by another officer upon the left : —

" He was mistaken, he was mistaken ; do you see here, there is infantry."

On this occasion the infantry never fired a shot, but used their bayonets, and had two valuable officers killed.

By Capt. Ross, Lord Cornwallis's aid de camp, he is informed, on every occasion since Capt. Cochrane quitted them they have behaved with equal spirit.

The very considerable loss they have sustained this campaign in officers will testify the particular share they have had in every enterprize, having from the 29th of May had 1 capt. 3 lieuts killed & 2 lieuts wounded, making near half the loss of the whole army employed there.

After the action at Waxaw the campaign not being expected to commence again before the month of October or November, as Capt. Cochrane had not been in England for near seven years and having a family there to attend to, he thought the then respite a favorable opportunity to visit them, intending to return to America as soon as he could settle his private affairs, which it became necessary for him to attend to, having his father in law Major Pitcairn killed in America, and his father Lord Dundonald dead at home since his serving in that country.

He therefore made application to Lord Cornwallis at Campden for his permission to go to England, and was honored with the annexed testimony of his Lordships approbation.

Campden, June 10th, 1780.

Dear Sir, — I cannot let you go from hence without expressing the very sincere regret I feel at your leaving my corps, and assuring you that on any future occasion I shall be happy in serving with so able and spirited an officer. I heartily wish you a prosperous voyage, and a happy meeting with your family, and am with great regard.

Your most obedient and faithful servant,

Cornwallis.

Honble Major Cochrane.

Capt. Cochrane repaired to New York, where he was further favored with the Commander in Chief's permission and confidence, and was entrusted with his Excellency's dispatches for Government with which he was endeavouring to get to England in a small schooner of his own, when attacked at sea the 16th of August by three rebel privateers; he only then saved himself by securing the men sent to board his schooner and sinking their boats, after delivering the prisoners he had taken at New York; in proceeding up the Sound he was again attacked by two rebel privateers from New England shore, and after a resistance of near 3 hours within sight of a British man of war and not more than a league from her, was obliged to abandon his schooner and swim a shore to save his dispatches, leaving every other thing.

Capt. Cochrane has been now upwards of eighteen years in the army, has hardly ever been absent from his regiment or service during that time.

He has purchased every commission, and what he at present holds has been attended with particular expense to him.

Almost every cotemporary has acquired the rank of lieutenant colonel before him, the only rank which gives an officer a chance of command and an opportunity of exerting himself when fit for service.

He humbly hopes your Lordship will be pleased to take his services and case into consideration and grant him the honor of your Lordship's countenance in obtaining advancement in his profession.

Proposals by the Honorable Captain Cochrane for raising a new Corps in America.

Captain Cochrane has been in the army upwards of eighteen years, during which time he has hardly ever been absent from his duty or service, and has acted for some years past as Major of the British Legion in America.

Before his departure from New York, Sir Henry Clinton was pleased to express a desire of serving Captain Cochrane. He therefore solicited his Excellency's countenance to his raising a new corps or second batallion to the British Legion.

Sir Henry Clinton was pleased to signify his approbation, and to say, that if it hereafter takes place he wishes to annex to whatever corps Captain Cochrane raises a body of men to the number of 300d who shall be ready to man the flat boats for transporting the army, the armed vessells for covering their landing or guarding the inland navigation and carry intelligence from one Province to another.

His Excellency was pleased to refer Captain Cochrane to General Dalrymple, who would digest such a proposal for the good of the service.

The following advantages might be expected to attend such an establishment.

It will bring into our service a number of maritime and other people who have heretofore been averse to take the ostensible part of fighting with us, yet will be ready to contribute their service in this less conspicious line.

If attention is given to withdraw from the enemy their artificers of every denomination and provide for them in this corps, it will act in a double proportion in our favor by getting what we deprive them of.

Many good consequences may be expected from such encouragement, and by arranging them according to their abilities or zeal they will render essential service to Government on very reasonable terms. If employed when not on other duties in building boats and armed vessels for the use of the service, and manning those vessels with the dependants of the corps whose inclinations and turn lead them to commence actively for us, we may induce many who as yet have kept back from acting for us, to begin by degrees and adopt more active sentiments, and latterly afford the fullest exertions in their power.

Such an establishment will point out a rendevouse to all unemployed adherents who do not contribute their services in the field; numbers must come to it for employment, and the produce of their labour (which will not cost Government the third of the present expence) will soon raise a powerful fleet of cruizers which will benefit those employed in them, distress our enemies, and protect our own trade.

Such 300 men to be enlisted and disciplined upon the same footing as the other part of the corps are, with this difference that when employed in working they shall receive double subsistance.

The knowledge Captain Cochrane has of the people and country, the attention he has paid to study those who compose the army and turn them to the best advantage for the service, and his own attachment for the possession induce him to hope, if intrusted with the conducting this new appointment, either according to the above idea or on any similar one which it may please Government to adopt.

That if honored with the command and rank of Lieutenant Colonel in the army he will execute it to the advantage of Government and his own credit.

The following Proposals are made of increasing the strength of the British Legion now in America with very little expence to Government. If the corps is put on the British Establishment, and the officers in it admitted to reap the same honor and advantage from their profession as the new levies at home have.

The present establishment of the Legion is 1 Lieu^{t} Colonel and 2 Majors, with 5 Troops of Cavalry, and 6 Companys of Infantry.

It is proposed to form now 6 Troops of Cavalry, and 8 Companys of Infantry, with 1 Lieut^{t} Colonel and 1 Major to the Cavalry and 1 Lieut^{t} Colonel and 1 Major to the Infantry. — To be under the command of Lieut^{t} Colonel Tarleton or Senior Officer.

Strength of the Legion to be

	Lieut^{t}. Col^{l}.	Major	Captain	Lieutenant	Cornet or Ensign	Surgeon	Mate	Adjutant	Qr. Master	Serjeants	Corporals	Drum or Trump^{t}.	Private Rank and File	
Cavalry	1	1	6	6	6	1	1	1	1	18	18	12	438	
Infantry	1	1	8	8	8	1	1	1	1	24	24	16	562	
	2	2	14	14	14	2	2	2	2	42	42	28	1000	

If Government are pleased to adopt this establishment for the Corps, The friends of Lieutenant Colonel Tarleton and Major Cochrane will immediately raise a body of men for the purpose of recruiting and strengthening the British Legion in America.

They shall be ready to join the Corps as soon as the new appointments preparing for them can be got ready to send out to America.

They [the] high estimation the services of the Legion have placed them in, with the exertions of Lieu^{t}-Colonel Tarleton's and Major Cochrane's friends within the circle of their influence, induce them to offer to raise a body of 300^{d} men who shall immediately join the Legion in America.

If they are permitted to get the rank of Lieut^{t}-Colonel in the Army — and to the Legion may be annexed that body of men for manning the boats, vessels, &c., as proposed by Major Cochrane, who will undertake the conduction of it.

The Memorial is without date, but must have been written later than August 16, 1780 ; but whether written in England or in America, or who his Lordship was to whom it was addressed, does not appear. Captain Cochrane had obtained leave of absence to visit England ; and it is quite probable that he did so in 1780–81, and that on his return he brought his wife with him to New York.

In October, 1781, Captain Cochrane was sent with despatches from Sir Henry Clinton, then in New York, to Lord Cornwallis, then besieged at Yorktown. He went in a vessel to the Capes, where he got into an open boat, in which he

passed undiscovered through the middle of the French fleet, and arrived at Yorktown 10th October. Lord Cornwallis, in testimony of his approbation of that intrepid conduct, appointed Major Cochrane to act as one of his aides-de-camp, October 16; but the next day his head was taken off by a cannon-ball, the day before the surrender, Oct. 18, 1781, in the thirty-third year of his age.

A different account says: —

"Another marked casualty of the siege was the death of Major Cochrane, who arrived at Yorktown on the 10th of October, with despatches from Clinton to Cornwallis. Two days after, in company with the British General, he went to the lines, and fired one of the guns himself; but as he looked over the parapet to see its effect *in ricochet*, a ball from the American works carried away his head, narrowly missing Cornwallis, who was standing by his side."[1]

An extract from a letter of Captain Mure to Andrew Stuart, dated Yorktown, Oct. 21, 1781, says: —

"I am sorry to be obliged to tell you that your nephew, Major Cochrane, suffered among those killed. He had his head carried off by a cannon-shot when standing close to my Lord Cornwallis. He came two days before, in a most spirited manner, with despatches from the Commander-in-Chief, in a small boat, and got through the French fleet; he is much lamented as a most gallant officer. I pity poor Mrs. Cochrane, who, I hear, is at New York."[2]

Major Cochrane was the only field officer of the British army who was killed at Yorktown.

NOTE.

Major Cochrane was of the same family as Sir John Cochrane, who was with Argyle in the Monmouth rising, and escaped with his life only by his father, Lord Dundonald, offering a bribe of £5,000. (Macaulay, Hist. Eng., vol. i. p. 515.)

The earliest contemporaneous mention of Captain Cochrane in America which I have noticed is found in the Diary of Ezekiel Price, June 22, 1775: "Captain Wakeman told me he had just come from Cam-

[1] Johnston's The Yorktown Campaign, 1781, p. 138.

[2] Mahon's History of England, vol. vii. appendix xxxviii.

bridge, where he saw Captain Cochran, who came out of Boston in a fishing-boat yesterday morning, by whom he was informed that the regulars had killed and wounded in the last engagement [at Bunker Hill] fourteen hundred men." (Proc. Mass. Hist. Soc., vol. vii. p. 192.)

The following entries are taken from the original Orderly Book of Lord Cornwallis, 1781, belonging to the Boston Public Library: —

"Oct. 12. 1781 the Hon. Maj. Cochrane is appointed to take the command of all persons in the garrison who do not belong to regiments, navy, or transports."

"16 Oct. 1781. The Honorable Major Cochrane to be obeyed as Aid de Camp to Lord Cornwallis."

Captain Cochrane left New York, October 3, with a duplicate of Clinton's despatch (September 30) to Cornwallis, which, if we may trust a memorandum on it, was "Received, October 10, from Major Cochran." (The Clinton-Cornwallis Controversy, ed. 1888, vol. ii. p. 173.) This bears on a question between these generals as to the time when the latter received certain intelligence by letter from the former. Clinton says: "The four other letters taken notice of by Lord Cornwallis were not delivered to him before November, because the three first [for reasons which need not be stated here] and the last (the substance of which, however, had been previously communicated in the presence of a council of war for his Lordship's information to Major Cockran [*sic*], who joined him on the 9th of October), being sent by advice boat, did not reach the Chesapeake before his surrender." (Ibid. i. 101.)

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